DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 298 649 EA 020 325

AUTHOR Blum, Robert E.; Butler, Jocelyn A.
TITLE "Onward to Excellence": Teaching Schools To Use Effective Schooling and Implementation Research To Improve Student Performance.
INSTITUTION Northwest Regional Educational Lab., Portland, Oreg.
PUB DATE Apr 87
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Washington, DC, April 20-24, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Administrative Policy; *Educational Change; Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; *Excellence in Education; Inservice Education; *School Based Management; *School Effectiveness; *Staff Development; Workshops
IDENTIFIERS Effective Schools Research

ABSTRACT

The Onward to Excellence (OTE) process has the goal of improving student performance through training and technical assistance at the school level. A 10-step improvement process incorporates six key concepts derived from an extensive review and synthesis of research studies on effective schools. OTE training for local school personnel is intended to establish an approach to improvement that is focused on student performance, implemented and managed at the school level, and supported by board and central office policy. The overall strategy is to intersperse training events with inschool improvement work. The participants learn skills and immediately apply the new knowledge in their schools. Follow-up support is also an important component to the training. Supporting material includes the results of the following surveys conducted at four pilot schools: leadership team group interview, nonteam teacher group interview, principal's interview, staff questionnaire responses, and a summary. (LMS)

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THE Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

PROGRAM REPORT

ED298649

"ONWARD TO EXCELLENCE": TEACHING SCHOOLS TO USE EFFECTIVE SCHOOLING AND IMPLEMENTATION RESEARCH TO IMPROVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE

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By

Robert E. Blum
Jocelyn A. Butler

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School Improvement Program
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

April 1987

EA 020 335

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500
Portland, Oregon 97204

"Onward to Excellence":
Teaching Schools to Use Effective Schooling and
Implementation Research to Improve Student Performance

Robert E. Blum and Jocelyn A. Butler
School Improvement Program
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

(Prepared for the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association: Washington, D.C., April 1987)

School improvement is a major focus for the Northwest Regional Educational Laboartory (NWREL). The NWREL School Improvement Program has developed a process for school leaders to institute and manage efforts at the school building level intended to improve student performance. The process is presented to school leaders through a training program entitled "Onward to Excellence" (OTE) over a two-year period of time. Schools contract with NWREL for the training service, necessary materials and supportive technical assistance.

Participation is elective. The decision to undertake the Onward to Excellence process is made by the school district board of directors and/or superintendent or by the individual school principal. Often, the superintendent or principal meets with NWREL staff to discuss the OTE process and consults with other school staff members before the decision is made. Because the process is designed to take place at the individual school level, school principal involvement in the decision is critical.

Research Base

NWREL's Onward to Excellence service (OTE) is intended to provide schools with a systematic, research-based approach to improvement of student performance. OTE provides a way for schools to move from effectiveness (all students master basic priority objectives) to excellence (most students achieve well beyond basic priority objectives).

The service is based on NWREL's extensive review and synthesis of educational research studies completed over the past two decades. Six groups of studies are included in this effective schooling research base. They include:

- School Effects Research: the comparison of higher- and lower-achieving schools to identify schoolwide practices that help students learn.
- Teacher Effects Research: studies of teachers in the classroom to discover effective instructional practices.
- Research on Instructional Leadership: studies focused on what principals do to support teaching and learning.

- Curriculum Alignment Research: studies of effective methods of organizing and managing curriculum.

- Program Coupling Research: examination of the interrelationships among practices used at the district, school building and classroom levels.

- Research on Educational Change: studies to identify conditions and practices that promote significant, durable change in educational programs.

Drawing on this research base, NWREL identified key concepts that guided development of the Onward to Excellence school improvement program:

- Improvements are tied to student performance, and changes in student performance are indicators of the effectiveness of improvement efforts.

- The school is the appropriate unit for focused improvement. Changes that improve student performance should take place at the school level, where the students interact with teachers and administrators and where changes in practice have the most impact on how well students learn and behave.

- School improvement must be managed. Lack of planning or careful management can reduce the effectiveness of improvement efforts.

- Improvements should be based on research results. The effective schooling research base offers examples, advice and direction that can strengthen improvement efforts.

- There should be an emphasis on improvement. Schools either get better or they get worse: they do not stay at the same level of effectiveness. No matter how good a school is perceived to be, there is always room for improvement. Improvements involve changes which take place gradually over time.

- Improvement should take place on a schoolwide basis, involving all staff in all content areas in a joint effort. Shared goals and activities among staff increase their interest and commitment and the effectiveness of improvements.

Guided by these key concepts derived from the effective schooling research, NWREL developed the 10-step research-based school improvement process called "Onward to Excellence."

Program Focus

The Onward to Excellence training/technical assistance service aims to develop capacity in local schools to use research-based school improvement to improve student performance. Capacity is defined as the beliefs, knowledge and skills required for the school staff to use effective schooling practices and goal based management processes to systematically improve student academic achievement, social behavior and/or attitude. Capacity also includes creating central office commitment and support for research-based school improvement. OTE training for local personnel is intended to establish an approach to improvement that is focused on student performance, implemented and managed at the school level, and supported by board and central office policy and action.

Specific goals spread throughout the series of six training workshops relate to developing the knowledge and skills required to implement research-based school improvement efforts. Goals are stated in terms of the steps in a goal based management process. In Workshop One, for example, principals gain the knowledge and skill necessary to introduce research-based school improvement to the full staff, select a leadership team and establish communication routines related to this improvement effort.

More detailed objectives are not written, but at the most specific level are defined by the workshop activities. In one instance, an objective to develop an awareness of the effective schooling research base is incorporated in three activities: viewing a videotape on the topic, listening to a short lecture on the topic and engaging in a team learning activity on the topic.

The overall strategy is to intersperse training events with in-school improvement work. OTE participants learn skills and concepts in the training sessions and immediately apply the new knowledge in their schools. The teams plan and conduct in their schools the tasks and activities presented in the training workshops.

Overall Program Design

The OTE program design was developed in stages. In 1982, NWREL completed the initial design based on results of a design conference at which nationally-known researchers and local-level practitioners recommended a multi-episode series with assignments for participants between training workshops. The conference participants drew from the results of effective schools research and the research on educational change and staff development to make recommendations about both program format and content area. This first design stage was piloted in six schools in the state of Alaska.

In 1983, a second stage design was completed and piloted in five schools in the state of Washington. A third revision was made and this stage pilot was conducted with three schools in the state of Oregon, also in 1983. The current overall design for Onward to Excellence was conpleted in 1984.

There are two levels to the OTE training design: the design for the entire training/technical assistance service and the design of the individual training workshops and assistance sessions. Design at both levels has been carefully constructed to take advantage of research on change, staff development and adult learning. The overall design includes three major components: 1) awareness of the service and the decision to participate, 2) training and 3) support and assistance.

Awareness

Because the service is not required or mandated by any authority or agency and is available for purchase in a competitive open market, the effort to create awareness about the service is essential. A three-part strategy has been developed to increase awareness and facilitate the decision of local schools to participate:

- Distribution of information about the service through direct mailings of newsletters and descriptive information and through presentations at professional conferences, seminars and other meetings.

- Face-to-face interactions at the request of local decision makers during which presentations about OTE are made at the local school or in a central location where representatives from several schools convene.

- Interactions via telephone or visitation between decision makers considering OTE and representatives of schools who have used the service successfully.

After a school or district becomes somewhat aware of OTE, a series of steps usually takes place leading to a decision about participation in the program. First, a key decision maker receives printed information about OTE and shares that information with other decision makers at the school and/or district.

Following review of the material and a discussion of benefits of the service to the school/district and the appropriateness to district priorities, a NWREL representative is requested to meet with central office and school leaders to discuss the service, how it has been used in other places and how it might be used in this particular district. The school/district leaders may ask for references, places where they can go to talk with people who have used the service successfully. From this point, local discussions result in a decision about participation. Many districts decide to participate and some decide not to undertake this approach.

Training

The training involves three important elements: (1) training workshops, (2) in-school application of concepts and processes learned and (3) support and assistance. Participants learn about the effective schooling research and a ten-step goal based management process through six

training workshops. With the exception of the first workshop, which is for principals and central office staff only, all training is for leadership teams from individual schools. The leadership teams include the principal, selected teachers and a central office representative.

Training is usually provided to teams from four or more schools at each workshop, so the number of workshop participants is between 24 and 45. Once established, the groups of schools and leadership team members in training workshops remain constant throughout the full training cycle, between one and one-half and two years. The scheduling of the workshops is dependent on completion of in-school application tasks, but there are general guidelines about how long it should take to complete the work.

The training workshops are one-half or one and one-half days in length. Each workshop is designed to teach one, two or three of the ten steps in the improvement process. Figure 1 lists the six workshops, their length and content. The workshops are described in a two-year timeline with the appropriate in-school applications inserted.

During the in-school applications of concepts and processes between workshops, the leadership teams plan and carry out in their schools assigned tasks using skills learned in the training workshops. At each workshop all participants are assigned the same tasks for completion prior to the next scheduled workshop. As these tasks are completed in the individual schools, a variety of approaches are used.

Support and Assistance

Support and assistance come from the service providers and from staff of the district central office serving the school. Activities include review and critique of plans and products; suggestions for resources and approaches; meetings with leadership teams to brainstorm and plan activities; providing opportunities for groups of leadership teams to meet for exchange of progress reports, sharing of concerns and joint problem-solving; conducting assistance sessions in individual schools; and holding formal celebrations to recognize results of improvement work. The training workshops introduce the concepts and processes, the in-school application reconfirms knowledge and understanding, and support and assistance establish the expectation and motivation to move through the process.

Figure 1
OTE Workshops
Sample Schedule

First Academic Year: 1986-87

January '87	Workshop One: Getting Started (1/2 day for Principals) In-School Application (Announce Program, Select Team)
Late February '87	Workshop Two: Effective Schooling Research and Profiling (1-1/2 days for Team) In-School Application (Profile Completion)
Mid-April '87	Workshop Three: Goal Setting (1/2 day for Team) In-School Application (Select Schoolwide Goal)

Second Academic Year: 1987-88

Late September '87	Workshop Four: Prescription Planning (1-1/2 days for Team) In-School Application (Develop Prescription)
Early December '87	Workshop Five: Monitoring (1/2 day for Team) In-School Application (Implement Plan, Monitor Progress) IMPLEMENTATION BEGINS SEMESTER 2, 1987-88

Third Academic Year: 1988-89

February '89	Workshop Six: Renewal (1/2 day for Team) FOLLOWS ONE FULL YEAR OF IMPLEMENTATION

Individual Workshop Design

There are five important aspects in each of the six training workshops: (1) review and reflection, (2) introduction of new concepts, (3) guided practice, (4) team planning and (5) summary and preview.

Each workshop begins with a review of the school improvement process, and the trainer indicates where in the process the leadership teams seem to be. The teams then reflect on the progress they have made to date and report to the large group. They indicate what they have done since the last workshop, what was successful, what problems they encountered, what results they achieved and their major concerns. A brief discussion of the major problems and concerns ends this aspect of the workshop.

Introduction of new concepts usually takes the form of brief trainer lectures describing the concepts and/or processes and illustrating them with examples from real and/or hypothetical situations. This aspect of the workshop may be interspersed with guided practice.

Guided practice takes the form of practice exercises, simulations and/or work on actual team tasks. During this aspect of the workshop, teams work independently while the trainer observes and provides feedback on their work. The guided practice ends with reports of progress and/or discussions to clarify the concepts and processes.

The next phase of each workshop is team planning. Teams analyze their progress in the school improvement process and plan the next steps they will take in their work, including both completion of uncompleted tasks and new tasks assigned in the current workshop. The trainer circulates among leadership teams, giving advice on next steps and providing feedback on team planning efforts.

Finally, the trainer presents a brief summary of the workshop and a preview of coming events. Particular attention is given to the date for the next workshop, which gives the leadership teams a deadline for completing the work just assigned. A longer range schedule is also presented.

Content of Training

The focus of the Onward to Excellence service is a 10-step process designed to become a tool for cyclical school improvement. At the completion of the first cycle of improvement, schools evaluate progress and renew efforts to continue managed, research-based improvements. The OTE process can be applied equally well in the various school configurations: elementary, junior high/middle school and high school. OTE is currently being used at all levels except kindergarten.

The content of the training workshops is designed to prepare school leadership teams to carry out the activities involved in each of the following steps in the OTE process.

Step 1. Organize for Improvement

Research shows that involving the school principal, other school staff members and district personnel jointly in a school improvement effort increases success. In the NWREL approach, a leadership team from each local school manages the planning and implementation of improvements in the school.

In this step of the process, the principal informs all staff that an improvement effort is taking place, introduces them to the concept of research-based improvement and describes the 10-step improvement process. The principal also points out to staff that there are opportunities for staff involvement in planning and implementation of improvements at specific steps in the process and selects the leadership team.

Step 2. Study the Research Base and Findings

The effective schooling research base identifies schooling practices and characteristics associated with measurable improvements in student performance. These "effective schooling practices" include elements of schooling associated with a clearly-defined curriculum; focused classroom instruction and management; firm, consistent discipline; close monitoring of student performance and strong instructional leadership.

The leadership team studies this research base to gain indepth knowledge of effective schooling practices. They then introduce the entire staff to the research and findings. More study can follow, as desired.

Step 3. Profile Student Performance

To make changes for improvement, it is necessary to know what is actually taking place in the school. Current levels of student performance must be identified before any planning for focused improvement takes place.

The leadership team collects data about three types of student performance: academic achievement, attitude and social behavior. These data are summarized into a single report called the school "Profile." The Profile provides a broad picture of the performance of all groups of students across many or all curriculum areas. For each group of data, a one-page description is prepared to include a display of the data (chart, graph) and brief narrative descriptions highlighting key findings. It is important that Profile data be readily understood by all staff. Narrative statements describe but do not evaluate data.

Step 4. Set a Goal for Improvement

Managed change is most effective when focused on one or two priority goals. When schoolwide efforts for improvement are tied to this goal, a commonality of purpose gives strength to improvement work.

At this step in the OTE process, the leadership team directly involves the entire school staff in the identification of a schoolwide goal. Student performance data collected in the Profile are the basis for this goal setting.

The team distributes copies of the Profile to all staff members for their review and evaluation. Staff members then are asked individually to rate and rank all narrative statements from every group of Profile data. This is done in a group meeting led by leadership team members. Staff members work individually and together to reach consensus on a single high priority goal area. This goal setting includes four steps:

(1) Staff members individually rate narrative statements according to their relative satisfaction with the current schoolwide level of student performance. They use a 10-point scale, from "-5" (very dissatisfied with results, nearly all students need improvement) to "+5" (very satisfied with result, nearly all students are doing well in this area).

(2) Rating only narrative statements with which they are least satisfied, staff identify areas of highest priority or relative importance for improvement, using a sale from "1" (low priority) to "5" (high priority).

(3) Staff now have a list of student performance areas with which they are <u>least satisfied</u> and which are of <u>highest priority</u> for improvement. Using this list, staff now establish an acceptable standard of performance for each area. These are realistic, long-range standards which would constitute "good" performance for students and would result in a high satisfaction rating.

(4) The staff members discuss all suggested improvement areas and standards, and as a whole select one or two short-term, time-based targets that they agree are of highest priority in the school.

Using this feedback from the staff, the leadership team then reviews the staff's selections. Narrative statements about student performance are rewritten as one or two long-term goals with short-term, time-based targets for improvement. From student performance data to goal, the Profile becomes an important tool for creating a schoolwide focus for improvement.

<u>Step 5.</u> <u>Check Current Instructional Practices</u>

An analysis of current instructional practice is necessary to determine where practices can be changed to meet improvement goals. It is important to know the degree to which research-based effective schooling practices are currently in place in the school.

The leadership team collects information about practices on a schoolwide basis. They also collect data from all staff through surveys and sometimes through classroom observations. Students may be surveyed for their perceptions of effective schooling practice in the school. Parent surveys may also be used. The team then summarizes the information and presents findings to the full staff. The staff reviews the data about instructional practice to identify schoolwide strengths and weaknesses.

This data collection is not intended to focus on a small group of staff or on individual teachers in the classroom. The purpose of this information is to get a picture of practice across all content areas, grade levels and classrooms in the school.

Step 6. Develop a Research-Based Prescription for Improvement

Once the goal is established and current levels of practice identified, the next step is to select ways to change practice to meet the improvement goal. The leadership team reviews effective schooling research results related to the improvement goal. They select instructional methods and techniques which research shows can contribute to the improvement of student performance in the goal area. This list of practices becomes the draft of the schoolwide improvement "Prescription."

At a meeting with the full staff, the leadership team presents the prescription and collects staff feedback and suggestions for improving it. The team then revises and confirms the Prescription and distributes copies to all staff members.

Step 7. Prepare for Implementation

The leadership team creates a plan for putting selected effective schooling practices into operation in the school. Responsibilities are assigned, materials are developed, necessary resources are identified and timelines are established for implementation of research-based practices related to the goal area. Copies of the implementation plan are distributed to all staff members, with explanation provided as necessary by team members.

Step 8. Implement the Prescription

According to the plan, the new practices are implemented in the school. The leadership team manages the implementation, working with staff members as required by the plan.

Step 9. Monitor Implementation

To assure progress toward planned improvements, the leadership team is responsible for monitoring completion of activities specified by the plan and adherence to the overall prescription for improvement. In addition, as the school progresses toward full implementation, the team monitors student performance to identify impact of the improvements.

The leadership team records all monitoring results, analyzes school progress and keeps the staff informed. Based on monitoring, adjustments are made to the prescription and the implementation plan as needed to improve effectiveness.

Step 10. Evaluate Progress and Renew Efforts

At the end of the first cycle of improvement (usually the specified target date for full implementation), the entire staff reviews improvement results under the direction of the leadership team. They identify strengths and weaknesses of the plan and its implementation, and they recommend ways to improve the schoolwide approach.

The staff and leadership team discuss the improvement effort and decide whether the school should continue to work in the original goal area or move on to a new goal. In either case, plans are made for entering a new improvement cycle using the process of data collection, Profile preparation, goal setting, prescription development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Experience to Date

Since 1982, the Onward to Excellence process has been carried out in nearly 300 schools throughout the NWREL region and in other parts of the United States. In some cases, OTE supplemented school improvement efforts that were already under way in the schools.

Examples of the use of OTE include:

- One elementary school in Alaska selected the dual goal of improving attendance and improving enaged time (time students spent engaged in academic tasks) in classrooms. The school improved attendance incentives for students, organized staff inservice on time-on-task approaches, reduced classroom interruptions and revised the curriculum scope and sequence.

- A junior high school in the state of Washington focused on imroving student discipline. All staff were trained in a discipline program selected by the leadership team after consultations with teachers. Building and classroom discipline procedures were revised and a steering committee was formed to monitor progress.

- In a high school in the state of Oregon, the leadership team and staff focused on improving student reading and writing skill levels. Writing standards were developed for the whole building, staff inservice sessions were conducted and each department wrote an implementation plan to include reading and writing in all content areas.

In these and other schools, NWREL staff guided local teams as they worked with their staffs to identify goals, plan for change and apply effective schooling research in local schools to improve student performance.

OTE Update: 1986

In 1986, NWREL revisited several schools where teams and staffs had completed at least one Onward to Excellence cycle of improvement to look at the impact and relative success of the improvement process. Four schools were selected for this OTE update visitation: two elementary schools, one junior high school and one high school.

In each school, a NWREL staff member conducted a series of interviews:

- An interview with the principal
- A group interview with the full leadership team, excluding the principal
- A group interview with five to seven teacher staff members who were not members of the leadership team

In addition to these interviews, all staff members were asked to fill out a questionnaire about their involvement in and feelings about the use of OTE in the school.

This information was compiled and each school principal received a written report of results of the visitation, including appropriate recommendations for adjustments in the application of OTE. The following key findings resulted from a review of those reports.

1. Suburban elementary school, grades 1-6, 512 students. First cycle of OTE. Two goals: to improve student self esteem and to improve critical thinking skills.

LEADERSHIP TEAM GROUP INTERVIEW

- There is increased collegiality and better planning of staff development because of OTE.
- Staff have become more reflective about teaching and have changed classroom practice.
- An improved working relationship with the principal emerged for staff.
- Staff felt there was district support.
- There was difficulty in finding accurate ways to measure student progress in goal areas.
- Implementation of changes in practice became cumbersome because there were two goals: this reduced clarity of focus.
- It was difficult to maintain staff interest, motivation and commitment.

- Process easy to follow and useful; interest in and use of research increased.

- Expectation is that the process will continue.

NON-TEAM TEACHERS GROUP INTERVIEW

- The staff in general was aware of goals and success in moving toward meeting them.

- Tnere were many committee involvements as staff tried to follow up on ALL the good ideas.

- One goal would have been more effective: there were problems in assessment of progress toward goals because goals were very abstract.

PRINCIPALS (past/present) INTERVIEW

- Principal requested that district allow involvement.

- Heightened awareness of potential for improvement among teachers.

- Process takes a lot of time and energy needed.

- There were problems finding ways to measure/test students in the goal areas.

STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

- There was wide awareness of the program and goals; and widespread feeling of involvement in the process; most felt degree of their involvement was about right.

- All staff learned about the research; most felt they learned quite a lot.

- Overall, about half of respondents felt the process made too many demands on them.

- Most felt it highly likely that the goal will be reached.

- Commitment to improvement was evidenced by the concern about how to continue to improve student performance.

SUMMARY

- Selecting two goal areas was inappropriate: staff were caught between them, trying to do all that was necessary to meet both goals.

- When implementing change in practice to follow the prescription, staff should not try to do it all at once.

- o School-wide involvement in setting and working toward shared goals had a positive effect.

- o As yet, measurement of progress toward more abstract performance areas (e.g., self-esteem, thinking skills) is difficult.

- o OTE requires significant time and energy of staff.

2. Elementary school, 394 students grades K-6. One OTE cycle completed. One goal: to increase student scores on standardized math tests.

LEADERSHIP TEAM RESPONSES

- o There were many activities to spur interest in improving math scores, and the team tried to involve as many staff as possible.

- o Teachers have become more proficient at teaching math.

- o The reesearch was very helpful.

- o The staff works togetner more than before and knows that school improvemetn takes a unified effort. It's a major burden, but all staff are carrying it together.

- o Time to get everything done was a major problem.

- o Communication to the staff was hard but the team is getting better at this.

- o The school planned to apply the process in a second goal area.

NON-TEAM TEACHER RESPONSES

- o The schoolwide emphasis on math resulted in a lot of activities which, genearlly, raised the school's "math consciousness."

- o This process was a lot of work for the team members and took a lot of time.

- o There were some problems with staff understanding what the process was and what the team was doing to implement OTE.

PRINCIPALS' (past/present) INTERVIEW

- o OTE increased staff awarness of working on improving student performance and staff is now evidencing ownership of the process.

- o There is new staff awareness of the research.

- o Tne single schoolwide goal brought the school together and refocused all on improving instruction.

- The process is a good vehicle for change.

- Quality team members and good district support contributed to the impact of OTE.

- Getting general staff involvement was difficult, although the planning and organization of the program were appreciated.

- Learning the OTE process demanded a great deal of the (past) principal's time.

- Lack of continued district financial support has hampered continued use of OTE; and generally the district is shifting its focus away from school improvement.

- OTE did result in improvements in student achievement, focused the staff on the reasearch, gave the school a new decision-making process.

STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

- All staff were aware of the improvement goal and most felt the goal was important in the school.

- All staff were involved in some part of the improvement process; most felt their involvement was about right; some felt they were involved too much; all learned some information about the effective schooling research.

- Most felt the school will reach its improvement goal; some were uncertain.

- Staff are more aware of the generalized priority of math and most are involved in practices focused on improving student math achievement.

- Concerns about school improvement included that too much focus on the goal may have a negative effect on students because of reduced focus on teaching and may take too much time and energy from other tasks; that there be continuation and momentum for the math effort as a new goal is selected; and the effectiveness of the process and the impact of additional stress and pressure on staff.

SUMMARY

- There was wide staff involvement in the process and the goal was met.

- Staff generally seem relatively pleased that the process worked, yet there remains confusion about what the process is and what will happen with a new goal.

- Keeping staff involved is a concern, as is the amount of time needed to follow the process. There is some confusion still about the overall process.

3. Small town/agricultural community junior high school, grades 7-9, 588 students. One OTE cycle, two goals: to increase students' scores on math achievement test and to improve the way students feel about coming to school.

LEADERSHIP TEAM GROUP INTERVIEW

- OTE was the first time the total staff has worked together: this resulted in increased commitment to improving student learning, boosted morale and led to good feeling about success.
- There is concern that the community doesn't know enough about the effort and the success the school has achieved.
- The OTE process focused and organized improvement efforts and reacquainted staff with the research.
- The current goal will be maintained for at least one more semester. There is expectation that the process will become regular procedure in the school.
- OTE involved a lot of work and put a great deal of responsibility on the leadership team.

NON-TEAM TEACHER GROUP INTERVIEW

- Both goals were known to non-team teachers.
- Math scores improved and the goal was reached before the implementation plan was officially in effect.
- There were many activities tied to improving math, in all departments. Math department curriculum was revised.
- The staff feel more focused and the students now have a better idea of what's expected of them.
- There is a need for more specific data, more accountability and more detailed prescription for the math goal.
- There was a lot of strain on the team and the math department to implement the prescription.
- Renewal of OTE interest and effort had not taken place for the school year but it was expected to happen.
- The community needs to get more information about what has been happening in the school.
- There seems to be more professional approach to teaching made by the staff and improved perception of the school's value by both students and staff.

PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW

- There were many activities by the team and the entire staff to work toward the math goal.
- Math scores went up and there was also a 40 percent increase in student attitude about coming to school.
- The process resulted in an increased sense of power and unity among staff; and there has been a positive change in staff-student interactions. The overall climate of the school improved. Parental ratings of the school improved, as well.
- The major negative factor in the process was the difficulty in finding enough time for teachers and administrators to accomplish all the tasks; occasional early release of students brought some criticism from the community.
- The research base gave the process credibility and reduced the need for justification of selecting OTE; and it provided a common understanding for the whole staff that led to improved communications.
- There was excellent central office support in the finding of time and money to follow through with the process.
- Although shared decision making already took place in the school, OTE proved more efficient than previous approaches.
- The process got results with students, showed teachers they could improve and promoted collaborative learning.

STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

- All staff were aware of the math goal; almost all were aware of the attitude goal; all felt the goals were important.
- Almost all staff were involved in the OTE process in some way and most felt their involvement was about right.
- Most staff felt they have learned new information about the effective schools research.
- Almost all staff felt the school would reach its improvement goal.
- Concerns included the maintainance of the level of effort, letting the community know about the progress, the potential for staff complacency reducing commitment to the process.

SUMMARY

- Staff felt the improvement effort had been a success; most were highly involved in the process and were proud of success.
- OTE resulted in closer staff working relationships and improved climate in the school.
- Problems centered on time and resources available for the process.

4. Suburban high school, grades 9-12; 1500 students. Third cycle of OTE. Three current goal areas: to decrease student absenteeism without increasing dropout rate; to improve student in-class behavior; to improve or maintain scores in all areas on a standardized achievement test (targeted subskill spelling).

LEADERSHIP TEAM GROUP INTERVIEW

- The school is working in an organized way to improve student achievement: goals are clear and setting goals has made a difference--it gets staff working together.
- With principal involvement as an equal member on the leadership team, decision making processes have become more effective: all team members are in fact leaders.
- The staff as a whole is working more cooperatively together.
- With this process, changes are in response to staff prioirites.
- Central office involvement has given the process more credibility.
- The research has been a catalyst to get people to talk about what and how they teach.
- We will continue using the OTE process, although time for all that is necessary continues to be a problem.

NON-TEAM TEACHERS GROUP INTERVIEW

- Everyone is now working together on the same goals in similar ways: this is a big change.
- There has been improvement in the goal areas.

- The consistent focus in the school over time has been beneficial; and the OTE process has helped in creating continuity, stability and consistency--much better than the previous one-year efforts.

- OTE has been a positive catalyst for school improvement.

PRINCPAL INTERVIEW

- OTE goals are now the reference point for individual teacher improvement goals.

- OTE has provided a way for meaningful, planned change and helps the school keep focused on improvement.

- The school district has been very supportive of the OTE effort.

- There has been successful work on group process skills and there is broader staff understanding that real change is a slow process.

- Initially OTE demanded a great deal of time from the principal, whose role now is facilitator and supporter.

- There is now a concerted effort to make decisions collaboratively.

- Teachers are taking more responsibility for the academic, social and emotional growth of students.

STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

- Staff were aware of all three goal areas: the majority of staff knew the three, every staff member responding knew at least two.

- The majority of staff felt the goal to be important.

- Approximately 80 percent of staff were involved in some portion of the OTE process, with most feeling the degree of involvement was about right.

- Staff all learned new information about the effective schooling research.

- Most staff believed that the school will reach its goals.

- Concerns about the process included maintaining staff enthusiasm, time and resources available, continuing work to improve the school long enough to really take effect.

- Concerns about school improvement implementation focused primarily on creating consistency of application, and on the long-term impact of the work on improving student performance.

SUMMARY

- The entire staff appeared informed and knowledgeable about the process and goals.
- OTE has contributed to increased collegiality and shared decision making in the school.
- Time for OTE process work remains a problem, though not unsurmountable.
- The stability and long-term nature of involvement in this process has increased staff interest in and commitment to school improvement.

Summary of 1986 Update Findings

Process Factors

- The involvement of the principal is critical to the effectiveness of the OTE process.
- Good communications between the leadership team and staff promotes implementation of the process, and particularly of the goal-setting and implementation planning steps.
- District central office support contributes to the staff's receptiveness to the process.
- A single concrete and measurable OTE goal contributes to the process success; several goals or abstract goals can be confusing or difficult to meet.

Concerns

- Identifying both enough time for team members and staff and sufficient resources to support the entire process (especially implementation) are the most pressing concerns.
- There is concern that it will be possible for the continuation of staff enthusiasm, involvement and commitment once the school successfully completes an OTE cycle. This is true in schools which have completed one cycle and in the school currently involved in its third cycle.
- In schools completing one cycle, staff still have doubts about long-term OTE impact, primarily due to memories of many sequential, unrelated, short-term efforts which had minimal impact.
- There is staff concern that the focus on OTE goals may reduce effectiveness in other areas.

- Institution of any new involvement increases demands on staff and this must be carefully monitored. Demands are particularly great on principals and other leadership team members.

- Communicating success to the community is important to staff: the school should be credited for improvement efforts.

Positive Effects

- OTE provides a schoolwide focus on improving student performance, often a new experience for staff, and promotes continuity and stability in school efforts and staff unity.

- OTE offers an organized approach for actually taking action toward identifiable improvement goals.

- Shared involvement in the process leads to shared, increased pride for personal contributions and school success, resulting in significant changes in staff (and student) attitudes about themselves and the school.

- Staff involvement in improvement efforts leads to a change in perception about what is good teaching and increased instructional proficiency.

- The use of research as a basis for improvement efforts confirms good practice, provides guidance for changing practice and gives credibility to both the process and the school's improvement effort.

- The structure of the process promotes full staff involvement and ownership in school improvements through collegiality and cooperative decision-making approaches.

- Success in OTE promotes positive "can-do" feelings in the school and can contribute to improved school climate.